

**METHODIST INTERRACIAL COOPERATION IN THE
PROGRESSIVE ERA:
AMANDA BERRY SMITH AND EMMA RAY¹**

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More than two decades ago, in a volume dedicated to American Methodism's bicentennial celebration, Lewis V. Baldwin proffered a list of *desiderata* to engage Methodist scholarship for the next centennial. The following item on Baldwin's list has gone largely unheeded: "More time and energy could be devoted to studies of blacks who were affiliates with white Methodist churches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries."² This study takes up Baldwin's challenge by offering a thorough analysis of two African American evangelists, Amanda Berry Smith and Emma Ray, who were long-time affiliates with white holiness Methodist churches in the Progressive Era. For both women, their interracial cooperation was propelled by the transformative experience of sanctification that simultaneously created division within the African American Methodist community and acceptance among white holiness folks.

In addition, this study further instantiates Methodism into the burgeoning historiography of interracial cooperation, a term that emerged in the Progressive Era to give expression to joint ventures between African Americans and whites. Amidst a recent flurry of studies on interracial cooperation in cities, women's organizations, and religious communities,³ attention

¹ A version of this article was presented at the 2010 meeting of the Historical Society of The United Methodist Church and the Western Jurisdiction Commission on Archives and History at Seattle Pacific University. Participants in the Methodist History working group at the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies provided insightful responses to an earlier draft.

² Lewis V. Baldwin, "New Directions for the Study of Blacks in Methodism," in *Rethinking Methodist History: A Bicentennial Historical Consultation*, eds. Russell E. Richey and Kenneth E. Rowe (Nashville: Kingswood, 1985), 190.

³ Anthea D. Butler, "'Only a Woman Would Do': Bible Reading and African American Women's Organizing Work," in *Women and Religion in the African Diaspora: Knowledge, Power, and Performance*, R. Marie Griffith and Barbara Dianne Savage, eds. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006): 155-178; Paula Giddings, *Where and Where I Enter . . . The Impact of Black Women on Race and Sex in America* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1984); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1996); David Fort Godshalk, *Veiled Visions: The 1906 Atlanta Race Riot and the Reshaping of American Race Relations* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2005); Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, *Revolt Against Chivalry: Jessie Daniel Ames and the Women's Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Columbia UP, 1993); Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993); Nancy Marie Robertson, *Christian Sisterhood, Race Relations, and the YWCA, 1906-1946* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2007); Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote, 1850-1920* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998); and Judith Weisenfeld, *African American Women and Christian Activism: New York's Black YWCA, 1905-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1997).

to Methodism is minimal, with the exception of James Bennett's discussion of interracial cooperation in New Orleans Methodism from Reconstruction through the Progressive Era and Susie Stanley's work on Wesleyan/Holiness women's interracial preaching.⁴ Building on Stanley's findings, this study pursues a comprehensive exploration of Amanda Berry Smith's and Emma Ray's interracial cooperation in the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, evangelistic meetings, urban visitation, and an educational institution.

Amanda Berry Smith (1837-1915)

Amanda and several siblings were born while their parents were slaves on adjacent farms in Maryland. Eventually her father worked enough overtime at night to buy freedom for himself and his family. Amanda's attempts at a formal education were largely unsuccessful, so she left home at age thirteen to work as a live-in domestic. In 1854, she and Calvin Devine married and had a daughter, Mazie, who was her only child to live to adulthood. Calvin enlisted in the Union army and never returned home. In 1855, while gravely ill, she dreamed she was preaching at a camp meeting; she recovered miraculously and was converted a year later. She married James Smith in 1865, largely because he expressed, falsely so in order to win her affections, a desire to become a minister. She had hoped to be a minister's wife and through that position, to find an outlet for ministry. The disappointment of her marriage was "grievous" to her, and compounding their marital conflicts were the early deaths of several children. Eventually they separated permanently. Her sanctification experience occurred in 1868; two years later she began preaching and singing at camp meetings sponsored by the National Association for the Promotion of Holiness. In 1878, she traveled to preach in Great Britain and India as well as Africa for several years. Upon returning home, she founded The Amanda Smith Orphanage and Industrial Home for Abandoned and Destitute Colored Children in Harvey, Illinois. She died in 1915 at the age of 78.

Interracial Cooperation in Evangelistic Meetings

Evangelistic meetings have long provided what historian Paul Harvey refers to as "liminal moments, [when] the bars of race [are] sometimes lowered, if only temporarily," and African Americans and whites worship together.⁵ Harvey's study focuses geographically on the American South and chronologically from the Civil War to Civil Rights, yet interracial evangelistic meetings extend beyond both parameters. An African Methodist Episcopal (AME) evangelist, Jarena Lee (1783-?), for instance, held interracial meetings in the Northeast and Midwest beginning in the 1820s. In her

⁴James B. Bennett, *Religion and the Rise of Jim Crow in New Orleans* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2005), 15-16 and Susie C. Stanley, *Holy Boldness: Women Preachers' Autobiographies and the Sanctified Self* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2002), 144-147, 161-164, 174-175.

⁵Paul Harvey, *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 2005), 3.

autobiography, she habitually noted the racial composition of her audiences, such as “white,” “colored,” “Indian,” “white and colored,” or “slaves and the holders.” A particularly inclusive audience in denomination and race heard her preach at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. “I spoke at Wilkesbarre (sic) to both White and Colored, Baptists and Methodists, and had an invitation to preach in the afternoon, had good congregations, and tears of contrition were visible in many places.”⁶ In the next generation, Julia Foote, the first woman ordained deacon in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, shared the platform at evangelistic meetings in the 1870s and 1880s with the Rev. Daniel S. Warner, a white holiness leader and founder of the Church of God (Anderson).⁷

Amanda Berry Smith held interracial evangelistic meetings in Methodist churches around the country, and like Lee, she included details about race. “I spent the two nights there with Brother Temple, of the African M.E. Church, but the white friends came in. As we kneeled together and prayed together and believed God together, we were blessed together.” Again she wrote, “We had some of the old-time manifestations of power in the conversion of sinners. White and colored all kneeled at the altar together, and asked for the baptism of the Spirit”⁸

Camp meetings also provided a space for interracial cooperation, as Smith’s biographer describes.

Although blacks were allowed to take part in all sessions, camp meeting organizers often scheduled special worship services geared toward African-Americans but attended by both black and white. Blacks at mainly white camp meetings were also often put in a separate section the front, near the speaker’s platform. White camp-goers enjoyed African-American music and the fervent worship style they observed in black religious gatherings Camp meeting organizers often reserved the end-of-night service for African-Americans to hold their meetings and gave them the first part of the morning service “generally at the break of day” so that their “often expressive and beautiful melodies” would be the last thing heard at night and the first thing heard in the morning.⁹

Smith often preached at the “colored people’s” meeting for the domestics and waiters who served the white attendees. She, herself, earned room and board at her first camp meeting by carrying water and cooking meals for a white family. At that meeting, she made a favorable impression as a singer and preacher and soon became a prominent speaker on the circuit of holiness camp meetings. As her celebrity status increased, so did the mostly white crowds who came to hear her, so that numerical estimates at one of her camp meeting services in 1875 reached 8,000. At a Mountain Lake Park

⁶ Jarena Lee, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Giving An Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel* (Philadelphia: printed and published by Jarena Lee, 1849), 59.

⁷ Douglas M. Strong, “Julia Foote: Exemplifying the Holiness Message of Fervency, Inclusion, and Unity,” in Henry Knight, ed., *From Aldersgate to Azusa Street: Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal Visions of the New Creation* (Pickwick, 2010).

⁸ Amanda Smith, “From Amanda Smith,” *Christian Standard* (January 4, 1896): 12.

⁹ Adrienne M. Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith: From Washerwoman to Evangelist* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1998), 58.

camp meeting, when she and Joseph H. Smith, a prominent white holiness evangelist, stood together on the platform, it evoked this response in the *Christian Standard*: “[S]tepping to the front, Rev. Joseph H. Smith took Sister Amanda Smith by the hand, and for a moment they stood thus, these two holiness preachers—the white man and the black woman—evidently too full of holy emotion to say or do anything. Then Brother Smith said, ‘Well, it’s all in the family, you know,’ and proceeded to sound out the usual altar calls with the usual success.”¹⁰

Interracial Cooperation in the WCTU

The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), founded in 1874, provided intermittent opportunities for interracial cooperation in the Gilded Age and into the Progressive Era. On the one hand, there were joint ventures between separate African American and white units, such as the construction in the 1880s of a Charlotte, North Carolina hospital for African Americans.¹¹ On the other hand, white WCTU members most often approached interracial cooperation by organizing separate African American chapters under the program, “Work amongst the Colored People.” When the WCTU was criticized by European temperance advocates for its “equivocal racial policies,” Frances Willard countered that individual unions had autonomy over all matters. As a WCTU historian commented, “Of course, the only black superintendent was the Superintendent of Colored Work, and the only black organizers worked solely among their own people.”¹²

Amanda Berry Smith joined the WCTU in 1875, the year after it began, and quickly became a prominent national and international speaker and singer for the predominantly white WCTU rallies. She was appointed a WCTU evangelist by the Evangelistic Department, which sponsored religious visits, church services, and Bible readings. Her voice was the first “raised in prayer and praise within the walls of Willard Hall” at its dedication service.¹³ For an international WCTU gathering at Faneuil Hall in Boston, she sang “a weird plantation melody, full of the hope and heart-break of slavery days” whose effect, according to an observer, “was utterly indescribable.”¹⁴ She drew the attention of Lady Henry Somerset, the British WCTU leader, who invited her on a temperance lecture tour in Great Britain, including a part in the platform party at the 1893 WCTU World Conference in London. In these venues, Smith’s interracial cooperation in the WCTU was national and international in scope, rather than in a local unit.

¹⁰ Mrs. E. E. Williams, “Pentecostal Services at Mountain Lake Park,” *Christian Standard* 32 (October 3, 1896): 10.

¹¹ Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow*, 52.

¹² Ruth Bordin, *Women and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1981), 84.

¹³ Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 97.

¹⁴ Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 98.

Interracial Cooperation for the Amanda Smith Home

The Amanda Smith Orphanage and Industrial Home for Abandoned and Destitute Colored Children was an institution “for the poor and friendless colored children of Chicago.”¹⁵ It provided a home and industrial education in domestic and job-related skills, commensurate with Booker T. Washington’s philosophy, so that the children, as many as thirty-two at one time, could become self-reliant. Support for this institution depended on interracial cooperation for fund-raising and an advisory board. To raise funds for the initial costs, Smith enlisted Methodist interracial cooperation across the country. Traveling from an AME church in Wilmington, Delaware, to the First MEC in York, Pennsylvania, from a two-week revival at Metropolitan AME Church in Washington, DC, to a holiness camp meeting at Mountain Lake Park in Maryland, she preached and pleaded for funds from white and African American coffers. Long before construction began, she invested “four years tapping her extensive, multiracial network of evangelical Christians and temperance reformers, extending herself beyond the church and camp meeting circuit into women’s clubs and other civic groups to launch this ambitious project.”¹⁶ Once the school was underway, she convened an interracial advisory board consisting of African American and white religious leaders—clergy, laity, and a bishop—and several philanthropists.¹⁷ Providing additional, occasional support were several well-known AME women—Lucy Thurman, Hallie Q. Brown, and Ida Wells-Barnett. These interracial supporters represented cities from the Midwest and Northeast as well as from Great Britain. Despite these influential, interracial leaders, however, the Amanda Smith Home could not remain financially solvent due to myriad problems, including a fire that destroyed a building, ongoing conflicts between Smith and the residential staff, complaints about the home by neighbors, failed inspections by orphan home investigators, and a chronic financial shortage. Within two years after Smith’s death, the home closed for good, but not before another fire erupted, killing two girls; its cause was inadequate electrical wiring.

Emma Ray (1859-1930)

*I was born twice, bought twice, sold twice, and set free twice.
Born of woman, born of God; sold in slavery, sold to the devil;
freed by Lincoln, set free by God.*¹⁸

Emma was born into slavery near Springfield, Missouri. After the war, her family and other freed slaves built a town out of scrap lumber and dis-

¹⁵ John T. Jennifer, *Centennial Retrospect History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (AME Sunday School Union, 1916), 319-320; cited in Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 107.

¹⁶ Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 122.

¹⁷ Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 131-132, 134.

¹⁸ Emma Ray, *Twice Sold, Twice Ransomed: Autobiography of Mr. and Mrs. L. P. Ray* (Chicago: The Free Methodist Publishing House, 1926), frontispiece.

carded building materials. With money and personnel from the North, schools opened, and a few blocks from her home, a church was started where her mother taught Sunday School. She left school after the fourth grade to work as a live-in domestic in order to help her family financially. Eventually she moved further away from home, lived on her own, and at age twenty-eight married L. P. Ray. Within a short time, their marriage began to suffer greatly between his heavy drinking and her quick temper.

Hoping for a fresh start following the devastating 1889 fire, they moved to Seattle and L. P. was able to find work as a stonemason. Shortly after their arrival, they were converted in the newly-formed AME church. They were then sanctified after hearing a talk on the doctrine by white holiness advocates. From 1900-1902, the Rays ran a mission in Kansas City, Missouri, for impoverished African American children, providing clothes, meals, a warm place to gather in the winter, trips to the park in the summer, and a weekly Sunday School. Moving back to Seattle, they joined a white, Free Methodist Church; they were licensed as Free Methodist Conference Evangelists and preached evangelistic meetings in Free Methodist churches throughout the state of Washington. Several times a week for nearly three decades, they worked in Seattle rescue missions. Emma died in 1930 at the age of 71.

Interracial Cooperation in the WCTU

Emma Ray's WCTU work commenced in the Seattle AME church when she and more than a dozen women launched the Frances Harper Colored Unit, named for the poet, writer, lecturer, women's rights activist, and the first WCTU Superintendent of Colored Work. Along with promoting temperance, they ministered to people living in the Yesler-Jackson area, a working-class transient neighborhood south of downtown Seattle, replete with rooming houses, saloons, gambling spots, movie houses, and brothels. Despite—or perhaps because of—the women's creditable outreach, their minister complained about the "class of people" receiving their ministrations. He wanted them to concentrate instead on their own community, particularly their church, whose heavy debt needed their capable fund-raising activities. The minister's criticisms eventually prevailed and led to the demise of the WCTU unit.¹⁹

¹⁹ Quintard Taylor argues that this conflict "reflected much deeper fissures in the small black community. The pioneers, a self-defined and increasingly self-contained group, viewed themselves as the only real community because of their permanence, their middle-class views and values, and their commitment to community-based organizations and institutions. The transients, the usually impoverished single men and women who resided in the tideflats or along lower Jackson Street, were often ignored by the middle-class community. Black Seattle, by narrowly defining community, acted much like its white and Asian counterparts" (Quintard Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* [Seattle: U of Washington P, 1994], 39).

In her recent study of African American women's spirituality in northeastern North Carolina, Marla F. Frederick documents that this practice continues today; women trust the church's finances to "male pastors and deacons who make business decisions for the church." Frederick then asks a poignant question: "Why would women continue to give to an institution that does not allow their complete and uncensored participation?" (Marla F. Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith* [Berkeley: U of California P, 2003], 178).

Undaunted, Ray remained a WCTU member by attending meetings of a white unit. She recalled this time of interracial cooperation in her autobiography. "I would attend the white unions. The women all seemed nice and sympathetic, and did all they could to help me. They said they were sorry, because we had sent in better reports than any other unions in the County."²⁰ She also continued to visit the jail with L. P., an honorary WCTU member, and several white WCTU women. In recognition of her work, she was elected County Superintendent of Jail and Prison Work for the WCTU. She attempted to restart an African American unit at the suggestion of Lucy Thurman, national Superintendent of Colored Work, who came to Seattle for the 1899 WCTU National Convention, but this unit quickly disbanded.²¹ Thus Ray remained active in the WCTU only through interracial cooperation with a white unit.

Interracial Cooperation in Urban Visitation

As a permanent resident in Seattle for over forty years, Ray's interracial cooperation cannot be separated from the city's racial demographics, for they indelibly shaped her choices of churches, residential neighborhoods, community activities, and outreach ministries. In 1889, the year the Rays relocated to the Pacific Northwest, there were only 406 African American permanent residents in Seattle, and the number increased incrementally, only 500 individuals per decade from 1910-1940 until the outbreak of World War II, when new factories opened to manufacture war-related goods and employment opportunities multiplied.²² Until then, the remoteness of the West "limited the size of the black population and hence precluded the formation of large racial communities."²³

Having grown up in the South amidst mostly African Americans, Ray made note in her autobiography of the very few "coloreds" she encountered on her urban visitation rounds. During one particularly harsh Seattle winter, she mentioned that there were "one hundred white people to every colored person" waiting in line for an evening meal at the mission.²⁴ When visiting in the Seattle jails, she explained that it was "a rare case in those days to see a colored prisoner. Most of the work [in the jail] was exclusively among the white people."²⁵ Few African Americans meant that the recipients of her urban visitation, even in the downtown, transient neighborhoods, were mostly

²⁰ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 72.

²¹ Lucy Thurman supported the organization of African American units because she believed the WCTU "will be to them just what it has been to our white sisters, the greatest training school for the development of women." Bordin, *Woman and Temperance*, 84. For information on the WCTU in the Pacific Northwest, see Sandra Haarsager, *Organized Womanhood: Cultural Politics in the Pacific Northwest, 1840-1920* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1997), 63-99.

²² Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community*, 7.

²³ Lawrence de Graaf, "Race, Sex, and Region: Black Women in the American West, 1850-1920," *Pacific Historical Review* 49 (May 1980), 311.

²⁴ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 234.

²⁵ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 73.

white, a unique situation during the Progressive Era which found an African American woman ministering to white outcasts—prostitutes, drug addicts, drunkards, convicts, and gold seekers returning empty-handed from Alaska.

No matter their race, the Rays often brought home released prisoners who “seemed to have a good experience in salvation,” because they noticed often the men would quickly “go down into sin again” upon their release.²⁶ For a transition period, they provided a bed, bath, new clothes, food, some jobs to do, and money for a shave. Once when Emma did not have a new coat to give a man, she washed his old coat “so full of vermin” and sang a gospel song as she worked. “He [the owner of the coat] stood watching me and helping me get water, and tears came into his eyes as I sang and rubbed. Years after he seemed very grateful, and could never forget what the Lord had wrought in his heart.”²⁷

Ray also partnered in urban visitation with Mother Ryther, who ran a home for orphans in Seattle. On Wednesday afternoons, they visited prostitutes and held meetings in brothels, like the “octoroon house” where the women were “bright mulattoes.”²⁸ Other days, they searched for drug addicts who lived “under the wharves, upstairs in old deserted buildings, and sometimes they were found in deserted outhouses in the mud flats—anywhere they could hide away in the daytime from the police.”²⁹ Whenever they cajoled some back to Mother Ryther’s home, they tried to wean the addiction by slowly decreasing the drug dose, remaining alongside them throughout the arduous process. This intimate association between Ray and Mother Ryther to ameliorate poverty, prostitution, drug addiction, and homelessness provides a poignant glimpse of interracial cooperation. These two women evinced an intimacy peculiar at the time even in Seattle, far from the southern epicenter of Jim Crow laws, a deep trust in one another that enabled them to engage in interracial cooperation as they walked the Seattle streets together, or labored side by side at the bed of a drug addict.

Interracial Cooperation in Evangelistic Meetings

From 1902-1905, Ray volunteered at the Stranger’s Rest Mission, run by a Swedish pastor, Rev. Faulk. The mission’s quarters consisted of two basement rooms separated by a door. Bunks and cots for rent at ten or fifteen cents filled one room; in the other room was a lunch counter where coffee, pie, and sandwiches were sold for five or ten cents. Evangelistic meetings were held in this second room complete with an organ behind a partition. The mission’s activities—eating, sleeping, singing, preaching, and praying—took place amidst the contaminated conditions of an unventilated basement, where the tide rolled in and mosquitoes proliferated. Ironically, she considered the mosquitoes a benefit because their bites kept the men

²⁶ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 74.

²⁷ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 229.

²⁸ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 75.

²⁹ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 77.

awake, despite their fatigued and often drunken condition.

When the Free Methodist Church took over and renamed it the Olive Branch Mission, its work increased in scope and quantity. “We hold seventeen services each week, besides the Sunday School and Police Station services. Tuesday we distribute tracts and papers among the sailors and long-shoremen. We have permission to go on some of the vessels and invite the sailors to the mission. At the police station we also labor and pray with our unfortunate sisters.”³⁰ On Sunday evenings, the Rays and several white workers took to the streets in Seattle’s vice district, known by names, such as “Hobohemia” or “the dead line.” In this description of the area, its inhabitants were likened to a “huge human ceramic plant”

with its waste heap of twisted, distorted, broken vessels; vessels twisted, distorted and broken by long years of contact with a harsh, cruel, culturally barren environment, and vessels in the process of whose initial fashioning the hand of the potter shook. And side by side of this mass of human debris one sees the daily moulding and marring of yet not fully fashioned human vessels by the ignorant, greedy and profane hands which in ‘Hobohemia’ reach out at every turn and leave their impress on the material they touch.³¹

Following the Salvation Army’s method, the mission workers sang loudly and played instruments outside a notorious gathering place, like Billy the Mug saloon, where five cents bought the largest mug of beer. On a particularly rainy night, Ray recalled they had to compete with the brass band from the vaudeville show also trying literally to drum up business. “When they stopped to rest, we testified, as otherwise the noise of their drums would have drowned us out. We testified and sang and the crowd would turn and listen to us and the band would start to play again, then we were compelled to keep still until they finished.”³² Once a crowd gathered, brief testimonies of conversion were preached, then, after a brief time of prayer, those interested in hearing more attended an evangelistic service at the mission. For fifteen years, from 1905-1920, when they aged into their 60s and felt unable to work “on the streets in the rain every night before the services,”³³ the Rays and their white co-workers engaged in interracial cooperation for Seattle souls.

In her article on AME women, Pamela Klassen concludes that preachers and singers like Amanda Berry Smith, Sojourner Truth, and presumably, Emma Ray, circulated among whites with relative ease due to their entertainment value. In other words, their function as entertainers encouraged whites to attend their events, even be converted under their preaching. Klassen then juxtaposes these entertainers with the “formidable intellectuals and activists” among AME women, like Hallie Q. Brown, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and contends that whites found these women more

³⁰ Mrs. Ruey Witteman, “Seattle Olive Branch Mission,” *The Seattle Olive Branch* 1 (August 1907), 2; archives of First Free Methodist Church, Seattle.

³¹ William Plummer Black, “Rescue Missions of Seattle” (Master’s thesis, University of Washington, 1926), 20.

³² Ray, *Twice Sold*, 158.

³³ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 237.

threatening due to their higher social class and educational achievements. “There is a distressing irony here: where Truth and Smith were embraced by white supporters and audiences both religious and political, the respectable women who based their authenticity and authority to speak on education, and perhaps class, were more uncomfortable presences for whites.”³⁴

Further, these “formidable intellectuals and activists,” also known as “race women,” because of their commitment to the uplift of their race, dressed the part with clothes that promoted “the politics of respectability” without “fully embracing fashion and costly display.”³⁵ Their dress signaled educational achievement, like that of Hallie Q. Brown, who was graduated with a bachelor’s degree from Wilberforce University. When the Wilberforce president pleaded for alums to return to campus to “educate colored teachers,” Brown responded and eventually became dean of the Women’s Department.³⁶ Klassen again contrasts AME race women and evangelist entertainers, this time on their dress, arguing that Smith’s plain, Quaker-like clothes broadcast her religious vocation and rendered her more suitable to whites. “Clothing,” Klassen concludes, “while a useful tool of communication of self to others, also evoked often unbridgeable differences—both between white and African American women and among African American women—in terms of class, religious preferences, and ‘civilization.’”³⁷

Klassen’s in-depth and provocative study of AME women has considerable merit, yet cautionary notes must be sounded. First, she overlooks that for an evangelistic meeting or a WCTU event, the speaker’s aim is to attract a large audience to hear her message, so to be known as an entertainer, a talented singer and speaker, is instrumental to boosting attendance. As evangelists, Ray and Smith wanted to preach the gospel message to as many who would listen. Second, Klassen’s declaration that evangelists were “embraced by white supporters” is naïve, because they too encountered pernicious racism from these so-called supporters. In her autobiography, Smith recounted racism even within the holiness community. Unlike Ray’s experience with Seattle Free Methodists, Smith visited a Free Methodist church several times and found there “the spirit of prejudice” as everywhere else.³⁸ Even within the intimate Tuesday Meeting gatherings, a white woman made visible her

³⁴ Pamela E. Klassen, “The Robes of Womanhood: Dress and Authenticity among African American Methodist Women in the Nineteenth Century,” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, 14 (2004): 68.

³⁵ Klassen suggests race women’s clothing fell midway “between the drabness of plain dress [such as Smith’s and Ray’s clothes] and the hoops, bustles, and ruffles of the fashionable ladies of the day” (Klassen, “The Robes of Womanhood,” 50).

³⁶ Jualynne E. Dodson, *Engendering Church: Women, Power, and the AME Church* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 72.

³⁷ Klassen, “The Robes of Womanhood,” 72.

³⁸ Smith, *An Autobiography*, 115. Amanda’s experience in the local Free Methodist church was often true for the larger denomination (Charles Edwin Jones, *Black Holiness: A Guide to the Study of Black Participation in Wesleyan Perfectionist and Glossolalic Pentecostal Movements*, ATLA Bibliography Series, No. 18 [Metuchen, NJ: The American Theological Library Association and Scarecrow Press, 1987], 76-77).

discomfort of sitting next to Smith. “She fanned and fidgeted and fussed and aired herself till I wished in my heart she had gone somewhere else.”³⁹ Third, Klassen fails to consider occasions where their superior education, dress, and manners gave race women, like the AME women she mentions, entrée to national, mostly white organizations. For instance, Rosalyn Terborg-Penn documents the involvement of race women in the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA), particularly Coralie Franklin Cook, who was “traveling in the inner circles of the NAWSA” and Mary Church Terrell, who addressed several NAWSA meetings. Terborg-Penn then makes this statement that counters Klassen’s argument: “Terrell and Cook were among the few African American suffragists recognized by the NAWSA hierarchy, *because both women were educated, professional, middle-class women, or the image of the ‘intelligent’ women* [Elizabeth Cady] Stanton had hoped to see enfranchised.”⁴⁰ In light of these necessary qualifications, the divergence, therefore, between women evangelists and race women is not as tidy as Klassen proffers.

Interracial Cooperation and Sanctification

Both Ray and Smith pursued a subsequent religious experience after conversion known as sanctification. John Wesley taught that sanctification removed the natural, sinful inclination that remained after conversion, thus enabling the convert to grow in perfect love toward God and neighbor. Whereas Wesley himself approached sanctification more as a gradual process, some of his followers promoted an instantaneous experience of sanctification that often exhibited strong emotional reactions. Eventually this latter group formed what came to be known as the holiness movement. This movement coalesced in the mid-nineteenth century, creating informal networks, designated camp meetings, religious journals, and later new denominations, which emphasized the sanctification experience as well as an ongoing commitment to living a holy life without alcohol, cigarettes, cards, dances, jewelry and fancy clothes.

Historian Susie Stanley rightly claims that sanctification provided Emma Ray, Amanda Berry Smith, and other Wesleyan/Holiness women evangelists with “holy boldness” for interracial cooperation. As Stanley documents from Smith’s autobiography, Smith possessed an initial fear of whites. “I had not been accustomed to take part in the meetings, especially when white people were present, and there was a timidity and shyness that much embarrassed me; but whenever called upon, I would ask the Lord to help me, and take the timidity out of me; and He did help me every time.”⁴¹ Eventually, empowered with the “holy boldness” of sanctification, she persevered in interracial cooperation. Beyond Wesleyan/Holiness women, historian Anthea Butler describes the pivotal impact of sanctification for women in the Church

³⁹ Smith, *An Autobiography*, 119.

⁴⁰ Terborg-Penn, *African American Women in the Struggle for the Vote*, 69. Italics added.

⁴¹ Stanley, *Holy Boldness*, 147.

of God in Christ (COGIC). “Sanctified COGIC women took their sanctified bodies to street-corner ministries, to the front pews of country churches, to classrooms, and, soon, to the civic arena. Transformed from the mules of the world to sanctified women who shaped and changed it, COGIC women engaged both spirituality and culture in ways that have become integral to African American religious and social life.”⁴²

After Emma Ray heard about sanctification from some white holiness folks who explained it through an illustrated chalk-talk, she yearned intently to be sanctified, often pausing over the washtub while doing laundry to pray for the experience. Finally, it happened,

[A]ll of a sudden it seemed that a streak of lightning had struck over the corner of the house, and it struck me on the top of the head, and went through my body from head to foot like liquid fire As my strength began to return, I felt a passion, such a love for souls as I had never felt before. I saw a lost world. My heart became hot. A fire of holy, abiding love for God and souls was kindled at that hour . . . and I feel it will last until Jesus comes.⁴³

However, when the Rays testified to sanctification in the AME church, the pastor and lay leaders censured them, and the criticisms mounted despite numerous pastoral changes. “We had four different pastors and none of them seemed to understand us, and did not want us to testify to the experience of entire sanctification, although it was a Methodist doctrine. We decided to go where we could have fellowship.” That sentiment was easier to announce than accomplish, because the only other African American church in Seattle at the time was Baptist. In the meantime, while visiting prisoners in the city jail, the Rays met some Free Methodist outreach workers, including Alexander Beers, president of Seattle Pacific College (SPC) and several SPC students. Whenever the Rays visited the Free Methodist church, they were treated “with courtesy,” a welcome contrast to “persecutions” at the AME church.⁴⁴

Along with sanctification, the Free Methodists shared the Rays’ commitment to evangelism among the poor and outcast. The denomination’s founder, B. T. Roberts, prescribed such outreach as integral to Christian faith and action.

In this respect the Church must follow in the footsteps of Jesus. She must see to it, that the gospel is preached to the poor. With them, peculiar pains must be taken. The message of the minister must be adapted to their wants and conditions. The greatest trophies of saving grace must be sought among them Thus the duty of preaching the gospel to the poor is enjoined, by the plainest precepts and examples. This is the standing proof of the Divine mission of the Church. In her regard for the poor, Christianity asserts her superiority to all systems of human origin.⁴⁵

⁴² Anthea Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2007), 3.

⁴³ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 63.

⁴⁴ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 91.

⁴⁵ Howard A. Snyder, *Populist Saints: B. T. and Ellen Roberts and the First Free Methodists* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 549.

During the Progressive Era, the Free Methodists sponsored a “remarkable chain” of mission work. “It was not uncommon for even small Free Methodist congregations to sponsor rescue missions or homes for unwed mothers, hold street meetings, or, at least, circulate religious literature among the poor.”⁴⁶ This practice resonated with Ray. “We felt very free when we went to minister to the poor. They always received us gladly. We were made to feel some of the sufferings of Christ It was a great pleasure for us to go on the streets, for there we had willing hearers, and it rejoiced our hearts to sing and testify to the poor down-and-outs on the street.”⁴⁷

Eventually, the Rays left the AME church and joined a white congregation, Pine Street Free Methodist Church. According to an early Seattle resident, their decision was highly unusual. “There were very few Black people who attended White churches in those days [M]ostly Black people attended Black churches and the churches were considered Black.”⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the Rays remained loyal Free Methodists for more than three decades, and denominational leaders endorsed and published Emma’s autobiography. Even beyond the institutional affiliation, the Seattle Free Methodist community provided their closest network of support. When Emma’s face was temporarily paralyzed from neuralgia, Free Methodist ministers visited her home to offer prayers and medicine. Their care continued to her death, and at her funeral service in the First Free Methodist Church, adjacent to Seattle Pacific College, ten Free Methodist ministers presided.

The Rays gravitated away from the pivotal center of the African American community in the Progressive Era—the black church. As a minister explained at the time, “The church is a social center, a club, a place of self-expression for the Negroes, and they support it because it remains the one resort in the community where they may develop their latent powers without embarrassment or restraint.”⁴⁹ A 1903 study by W. E. B. DuBois documented that from a national population of 12 million African Americans, 2.7 million, roughly 23%, were active church members.⁵⁰ While the South had the highest percentage of African American church attendance, the church was no less central in Seattle, where “Jones Street AME and Mount Zion

⁴⁶ William Kostlevy, “Benjamin Titus Roberts and the ‘Preferential Option for the Poor’ in the Early Free Methodist Church,” in *Poverty and Ecclesiology: Nineteenth-Century Evangelicals in the Light of Liberation Theology*, ed. Anthony L. Dunnivant (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), 66; quoted in Snyder, *Populist Saints*, 669.

⁴⁷ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 91.

⁴⁸ Esther Hall Mumford, ed. *Seven Stars and Orion: Reflections of the Past* (Seattle: Ananse Press, 1986), interview with Muriel Pollard.

⁴⁹ Daniel G. Hill, “The Negro in Oregon: A Survey” (M.A. Thesis, University of Oregon, 1932), p. 63; quoted in Taylor, *Forging of a Black Community*, 37. See also E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken, 1963; repr., 1974). For a recent discussion of the phrase, “the black church,” see John Giggie, *After Redemption: Jim Crow and the Transformation of African American Religion in the Delta, 1875-1915* (New York: Oxford UP, 2008), 6-7.

⁵⁰ Martha S. Jones, “‘Make Us a Power’: African American Methodists Debate the ‘Woman Question,’ 1870-1900,” in *Women and Religion in the African Diaspora: Knowledge, Power, and Performance*, ed. R. Marie Griffith and Barbara Dianne Savage (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2006), 133.

Baptist churches were the nexus of community social life.⁵¹ “Local news was exchanged as people got together for worship service as well as revivals, various entertainments and fundraising activities. All of the major holidays, except Independence Day, were celebrated with services at the church.”⁵² When the Rays forfeited this connection to the African American community, they had no other one. Neither belonged to a fraternal or civic organization, because their extra-curricular activities, revolving notably around alcohol, were a temptation for L. P., a recovering alcoholic. Without children or an extended family in Seattle to provide other avenues into the African American community, they left no affiliation behind when they left the AME church.

Even Emma’s clothing attested to the transition. Previously, in a group photo of the Frances Harper Colored WCTU unit, she dressed like her middle-class contemporaries in a close-fitting, two-piece dress with small buttons, ribbon trim on the bodice, and a white, lacy collar. Thirty years later, in a picture on the frontispiece of her autobiography, her clothing was simple, no frills, more masculine than feminine. Her dark suit jacket was identical to L. P.’s, and a ministerial collar topped her white shirt; she wore the clothes of a male minister. More than clothing, however, she agonized about her hair. For thirty years, from age eleven to her early forties, she attached false hair in what was called a chignon or a waterfall. She described it as a “great big amount of hair with wires run through to hold it on and make it light and puffy.”

I had worn it so long that it had killed the roots of my hair, and I was partially bald, and I would not listen to any suggestions about putting it away . . . It took me a long time to get my hair all fixed and curled. I had to dye it to keep it black. I spent many dollars upon invisible pins and nets, besides a whole lot of worry as to whether I had it on straight or not. I did not want anyone to know I wore it, and many times I was late getting to church Sunday morning because I would stand before the glass to see if I had it good and secure, and I often tried my husband by taking so much time. I began to get tired of it and I would do it up Saturday nights all ready for the Sabbath, but somehow I could not fix it right.⁵³

She became increasingly convicted about her vanity and resolved that the false hair with its accoutrements had to go. Mustering the courage, she detached it and flung it into the fire. Her story ended with these words, “I took my comb and brush and brushed what little hair I had. I made me a little bonnet and put streamers of ribbon and tied them under my chin. The ribbons cover the bald places on the back of my head, where the hairpins had worn the hair off. That night my sleep was so peaceful.”⁵⁴ As with COGIC women, her clothing and hairstyle became “evocative of holiness.”⁵⁵

⁵¹ Taylor, *Forging of a Black Community*, 38.

⁵² Esther Hall Mumford, *Seattle’s Black Victorians, 1852-1901* (Seattle: Ananse Press, 1980), 154.

⁵³ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 93-94.

⁵⁴ Ray, *Twice Sold*, 94-95.

⁵⁵ Butler, *Women in the Church of God in Christ*, 85.

Amanda Berry Smith's interracial cooperation commenced in earnest when she was sanctified in a white Methodist church. On a summer Sunday morning in 1868, she walked nearly a mile, passing on the way her own Bethel AME Church at 214 Sullivan Street in the "Little Africa" community of Greenwich Village, in order to hear The Rev. John Inskip's preaching on sanctification at the Green Street Methodist Episcopal Church.⁵⁶ She had pursued sanctification within her own community, first through a weekly, Monday afternoon prayer band gathering, complete with a regular foot-washing ritual with three other African American women. She had also initiated discussions with a few AME pastors sympathetic to sanctification, but it was to no avail. Determined to hear Inskip's explanation of sanctification, she entered the church, despite feeling the brand of her skin color, and sat in a back pew. During his preaching, she was sanctified with an electrified jolt that prompted an audible shout from her lips, "Glory to Jesus." Even though Inskip responded to her exclamation with a verbal affirmation of "Amen, Glory to God," she feared disapproval from the white crowd, so she quit the church and retreated to her own community among the Fifteenth Ward of New York City.⁵⁷

Like the Rays, Smith also received criticism about sanctification from her AME pastor.

He was fierce. He openly opposed and denounced the doctrine and experience [H]e would take especial pains to tell some ridiculous inconsistency about some sanctified sister or brother that he used to know. Then, if a sister, he would say: "They put on a plain bonnet and shawl and wear a long face, but they are sanctified Devils." Then all eyes would be turned on Sister Scott and myself, for we were about the only ones that dressed in the way described. Then there would be a regular giggle all over the house. How much I had to contend with.⁵⁸

From such opposition, Smith felt like "a speckled bird among my own people on account of the profession of the blessing of holiness. Remarks would be made like, 'There is Amanda Smith, with her sanctification again.'"⁵⁹

To find camaraderie on sanctification, she attended the Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness, and these connections helped to position her at the epicenter of the Wesleyan/holiness movement. When she retired from responsibilities at her school, she moved into a home built specifically for her on the Florida property of a wealthy, white, holiness Methodist, George Sebring. Sebring, in gratitude for his experience of sanctification under her preaching, promised her a home near his own.⁶⁰ Due to Jim Crow restrictions detailing where African Americans could and could not live, her house was out of bounds per the color line. "Defying the South's rigid color line, Sebring built Smith's cottage just south of his own house. A local resident

⁵⁶ Inskip's reputation as a holiness leader was well-attested due to his recent election as president of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness.

⁵⁷ Smith, *An Autobiography*, 79.

⁵⁸ Smith, *An Autobiography*, 109-110.

⁵⁹ Smith, *An Autobiography*, 108.

⁶⁰ Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 140.

predicted possible trouble because her bungalow was ‘not in colored town,’ but just south of the town founder’s.’⁶¹ No trouble erupted, and Smith joined the local white Methodist Episcopal Church, although she remained a life-long member of the AME church. She died not long after moving to Florida, an African American living and worshipping in a white community.

Evident in these brief scenarios was a prevailing AME sentiment against the holiness movement’s interpretation of sanctification. For instance, in a series of articles in the AME publication, *Christian Recorder*, a leading AME member, Rebecca Steward, critiqued the notion of sanctification as a subsequent experience, arguing instead that it consists in Christian love in action. “It is a mistaken idea that we can be Christians and not be sanctified Christians . . . Oh! I wish that every Christian would feel that he is a sanctified Christian, and go to work as such . . . instead of sitting still and dreaming: ‘Can I be sanctified, or when can I be sanctified.’ Oh! That Christians would awake, and look around, and see what they can do for the Master.”⁶² Her sentiments on sanctification figured largely in the next generation of AME leaders, thanks to the publication of her memoirs by her son, the Rev. Theophilus G. Steward. In light of these strong objections, it is not surprising that the African American holiness movement grew, notes historian John Giggie, not from the AME Church, but from the leadership of three black, Baptist ministers in the Delta region—William Christian, Charles Price Jones, and Charles Harrison Mason.⁶³

Compounding the AME’s opposition to sanctification was their resistance to women preachers. The long and torturous struggle, narrated by such contemporary historians as Stephen Ward Angell, Julius H. Bailey, Jualynne Dodson, Martha S. Jones, and Albert George Miller,⁶⁴ galvanized around woman’s sphere as circumscribed by the domestic, familial, private realm. Such was the strong conviction of the Reverend James A. Johnson, a leading AME critic of women preachers.

Johnson placed the pulpit at odds with the home. Johnson defined women as the ‘weaker vessel,’ and argued that women were physically incapable of dealing with the hardships encountered in the itinerant lifestyle. According to Johnson, women were intellectually and physically designed for the “particular Sphere” of the home

⁶¹ Israel, *Amanda Berry Smith*, 140.

⁶² Albert George Miller, *Elevating the Race: Theophilus G. Steward, Black theology, and the Making of an African American Civil Society, 1865-1924* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee, 2003), 110.

⁶³ “The African American Holiness movement in the Delta quickly established itself and spread east and west of the Mississippi River to become the fastest-growing form of organized black religion in the nation during the early 1900s” (Giggie, *After Redemption*, 169).

⁶⁴ Stephen Ward Angell, “The Controversy over Women’s Ministry in the African Methodist Episcopal Church During the 1880s: The Case of Sarah Ann Hughes,” in *This Far By Faith: Readings in African-American Women’s Autobiography*, eds. Judith Weisenfeld and Richard Newman (New York: Routledge, 1996): 94-109; Julius H. Bailey, *Around the Family Altar: Domesticity in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1865-1900* (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2005); Jualynne Dodson, “Nineteenth-Century A.M.E. Preaching Women,” in *Women in New Worlds*, ed. Hilah F. Thomas and Rosemary Skinner Keller (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981): 276-89; Jones, “‘Make Us a Power’” and Miller, *Elevating the Race*.



Emma Ray (seated front, center) photographed at Snohomish, Washington tent meeting.

where they could be protected by a male, either a father or a husband. Sanctioning female preachers, he asserted, would substitute man's will for God's will and do nothing more than "damage the church."⁶⁵

Therefore, as Ray and Smith preached in churches, at camp meetings, and on street corners, empowered by the "holy boldness" of sanctification, they publicly challenged this narrow construction of gender roles.

Conclusion

Two photos birthed this study. The cover photograph on this issue of *Methodist History* first appeared on the October, 1896, front cover of the holiness journal, *Christian Standard*. In it, fifteen elderly white men and women posed in front of the Thompson Cottage at Mountain Lake Park, a Methodist camp meeting cum resort in the Allegheny Mountains of Western Maryland. In their midst was a single African American woman—Amanda Berry Smith. The other photo, which is featured above, was unearthed in the First Free Methodist Church archives in Seattle, Washington. It was taken two decades later and three thousand miles away at a tent meeting in rural Snohomish, Washington, thirty minutes northwest of Seattle. Again, the group consisted of elderly white men and women, leaders in the Free Methodist church; seated front and center was Emma Ray, the lone African American woman. These two photos encapsulate for posterity the interracial cooperation of the friends and religious communities of Amanda Berry Smith and Emma Ray. Further, for the Methodists in these photos, interracial cooperation was not a transitory, liminal moment, but a lasting association that forged daily, interracial relationships in the Progressive Era. By teasing

⁶⁵ Bailey, *Around the Family Altar*, 86.

out the ramifications evinced in these photos, this study heeds Baldwin's call to consider the import of African Americans affiliated with white Methodist churches in the Progressive Era.